PREFACE

The impetus to dive deeper into the works of Shakespeare had been working in my mind from my college days and my post graduation in English literature laid the foundation for this. My late husband Dr. S.O.Ramakrishnan was a doctorate in Advaitic philosophy and my discussions with him made me wonder how the subject philosophy, which is a hard nut to crack has been conveyed not only through our great epics and literatures but also through the works of great literatures of the world. This thinking drew me more towards Shakespeare because his works seemed to reflect many concepts of Indian philosophy. My husband’s thesis on Advaitic Absolutism made me ponder over Saguna Brahman with all attributes since it could be easily understood. Moreover, my dissertation for my M.Ed. titled ‘Human Values in Education’ had been guided to a great extent by my husband, who used to provoke me to do my doctoral research combining both literature and philosophy because there is no literature without philosophy. I could not heed to this then, but the idea was dormant in my mind for decades.

About five years ago, when my guide Dr. Padma Srinivasan came to our school to preside over a function, the casual discussion with her and her friend triggered off my latent desire. When I told about my interest in Shakespeare, my guide immediately said that many ideas of Shakespeare reflect the concepts of Visistadvaita, the philosophy of Sri Ramanuja. I was reluctant considering my age but she persuaded me to take up the challenge. I began this arduous journey.

Dr. Padma Srinivasan narrowed down the topic and suggested the title, ‘A Study of Selected Works of Shakespeare in the light of Sri
Ramanuja’s Philosophy’. A close study of both these eminent personalities made me realize that great people, despite the fact that they are divided by space, age, language, race and culture think alike in many aspects, especially those concerning human values. Studying the philosophy of Sri Ramanuja through the literary stalwart in English has given me a platform to air my views on values that is getting degenerated among the youths of today.

Sri Ramanuja’s system of *Visistadvaita*, because of its thoroughness, profundity, and for its rational approach to many of the philosophical problems, has earned the admiration of many scholars, oriental as well as occidental. All the orthodox Indian philosophies are based on *Vedas* and *Upanisads*. Sri Ramanuja relies upon *Brahmasutra, Bhagavad Gita, Upanishads* and the works of Alwars of 6th to 9th century, to construct his system. To Ramanuja Brahma is with shoreless compassion and all good qualities that are revealed through a personal God. He asserts that God is the ‘support’ and the world is the ‘supported’. God is the end and the world is a means to that end. Man with his sincere prayers must surrender to Him to attain liberation. The renowned masters of literature repeatedly talk about this in myriad ways. Shakespeare is no exception. Through his characters he instills this vital message. This forms the basis for the present thesis, classified into six chapters with an introduction followed by the other chapters that scrutinize the concepts of Time, Beauty, Attributive Consciousness, Mercy and Absolute Surrender and relate them to some of the works of Shakespeare.

The one foremost limitation of the present thesis is the non-inclusion of many of the plays of Shakespeare and also his poems like
*Venus and Adonis, The Rape of Lucrece, The Phoenix and the Turtle* and so on due to paucity of space. I regret very much for not including *Hamlet* in a detailed manner. *Hamlet* is one single play that can yield itself to any kind of philosophical inquiry. Similarly Shakespeare’s Historical Plays can be examined separately.


Last but not the least, I humbly dedicate this work to my Guiding Spirit, Dr. S.O. Ramakrishnan, my husband.